

# Your Child and Secondhand Smoke

## **What is secondhand smoke?**

- Secondhand smoke is a mixture of burning tobacco from cigarettes, cigars or pipes and the air that smokers breathe out when they smoke.
- It contains many harmful chemicals that can cause illness in adults and children.

## **Secondhand smoke can harm babies and children in many ways including:**

### ***Lungs:***

- Irritates nose, mouth, and throat.
- Makes your child cough and wheeze.
- Damages lungs so they don't work well.
- Increases frequency of colds.
- Increases chances of getting bronchitis or pneumonia.
- Increases chances of developing asthma or making asthma worse.

### ***Ears:***

- Causes frequent ear infections.
- Increases fluid behind eardrums. This can damage hearing.

### ***Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS):***

- Infants born to mothers who smoke while pregnant and infants who are exposed to smoke are at a greater risk of dying from SIDS.

## What can I do to protect my child from secondhand smoke?

Your child depends on you to protect him or her from harmful things like secondhand smoke.

- If you smoke, QUIT!
- Keep your entire house smoke-free.
- Keep your car smoke-free.
- Keep your child in smoke-free areas when you are away from home.
- If you smoke, wash your hands and change your clothes before you hold your baby.
- Choose smoke-free restaurants. A “non-smoking area” does not protect your baby from secondhand smoke.
- Choose a child care provider who doesn’t smoke or allow smoking in the child care center.
- If you are pregnant, stop smoking now, before your baby is born.

## REMEMBER...

- Children who see parents or family members smoking are more likely to start smoking themselves.
- More than half of people who smoke started smoking before they were 18 years old.

## Where can I get more information?

- Your child’s health care provider.
- Your public health department.

**Ready to quit smoking?**

**1-800-QUIT-NOW**

**1-800-784-8669**



South Carolina Department of Health  
and Environmental Control

**[www.scdhec.gov](http://www.scdhec.gov)**